

A survey of university museums in Shanghai and their role in World Expo 2010

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Abstract

World Expo is a grand gathering of the world cultures, during which the host city welcomes people from around the world and also takes this significant opportunity to promote its culture and spirit. Besides the new pavilions of participant countries or regions, the existing museums, galleries, theatres, heritage buildings entice visitors from around the globe to explore and learn about cultural diversity and social harmony.

University museums, as an integral part of the cultural scene of any city, can showcase their diversity and project it into this global intellectual and cultural festival. This paper investigates the university museums' role in presenting cultural information and images during the past World Expo and specifically, surveys eleven university museums in Shanghai and examines how they contributed to the Shanghai Expo 2010.

Introduction

In recent times there has been a growing awareness and increasing research on the relationship between cities and their museums (JONES ET AL. 2008). Much of this has focused on museums that represent and interpret the history of their city to both visitors and local inhabitants. This interest has been driven by increasing global urbanization. Over half the world's population now resides in cities (PREVELAKIS 2008).

City museums can be the focus of specific cultural events, such as the celebration of milestones and anniversaries, and can also serve specific social purposes (e.g. GALLA 1995). The relationship of changing urban demographics has exercised the minds of museum planners. The opportunities for museums to be engaged as part of urban planning, has also been a focus of attention (GREWCOCK 2006).

University museums, while they may attempt to engage with broader audiences, are primarily responsible to their host academy. The advent of a significant international cultural event such as a World Expo potentially opens up museum spaces, including university museum spaces, to new and significantly expanded audiences. Little has been written on the relationship between cities and their university museums. This paper documents increased activity of university museums in Shanghai as a result of World Expo 2010; it seems reasonable to assume that much of it was due to this major international cultural festival.

Expo 2010 Shanghai is an international event hosted by the Shanghai Municipality. It ran from May 1 to October 31, 2010. The theme was *Better City - Better Life*. As indicated on the website, its goal was to attract the participation of 200 countries and international organizations and 70 million visitors. Obviously, with strong support from the municipality and Chinese central government in terms of infrastructure upgrade, preferential policy, event promotion and personnel support, this goal is likely to be achieved (60 million visitors as of October 8, 2010). This means that Expo 2010 has become such a large-scale world's fair that it surpasses any previous World Expo and therefore represents a most significant cultural, commercial and political event.

Shanghai has undergone profound development in recent years. The website for CAMOC: the International Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities notes that in 1980 Shanghai had 121 buildings over eight stories, this had grown to 3,529 by 2000 and 10,045 by 2005.

The city features its own urban planning museum. The centerpiece of the exhibition is a huge scale model of the city of Shanghai, showing all existing and approved buildings. Much of the recent development of city infrastructure positioned it to host a large international Expo.

The Expo attracted millions of local visitors from Shanghai and other parts of China as well as visitors from around the globe, who actively participated in this city-wide celebration. University museums, as an integral part of the cultural scene of Shanghai, had a significant historical opportunity to engage at a new level with local and international audiences through this global intellectual and cultural festival.

University museums in Shanghai initially developed in the 1990s and witnessed rapid development in the new century along with booming economic conditions in China. As a result, in recent years, they seek to expand their roles and serve wider communities.

How have they responded to the challenge and opportunity of Expo 2010? What sort of a contribution to the Expo have they made? Have they utilized this event to promote the museums and their collections by increasing accessibility for the public? How could they come up with a development strategy coping with post-expo circumstances?

With these questions in mind, eleven top university museums in Shanghai were investigated in an attempt to understand their engagement with, and contribution to, Expo 2010 Shanghai and to identify their strategies both during and after this massive international event.

Development of university museums in Shanghai

In 2005, the top ten university museums of national culture were announced by Shanghai Municipality as an initiative to promote cultural education. These included Fudan University Museum, Shanghai



Fig. 1 - Shanghai University, Museum of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Photo: Andrew Simpson

Jiaotong University C.Y. Tung Maritime Museum, East China Normal University Chinese Ancient Coins Museum, Donghua University Chinese Costume Museum, Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine Museum, Shanghai Ocean University Museum, Shanghai Normal University Ceramics Museum, The Museum of Oriental Musical Instruments affiliated to Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Shanghai Theatre Academy Chinese Traditional Opera Museum and the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology Printing Museum. Later, in 2007, a newly established Shanghai University of Sport Chinese Martial Art Museum was added to the list.

Although for some of these university museums, their collections can be tracked back to the early 20th century, the museums have not been purposefully grown and developed until 1990s. Only at the start of the 1990s did they begin to serve a teaching and research function for their universities. Purpose-built museums such as Fudan University Museum (1992) emerged. The new century saw rapid development of university museums with the expansion of exhibition areas, the erection of new buildings and the merging of some smaller museums. After 2005 university museums in Shanghai

enjoyed prosperous times. As part of the development plan of municipal education, and the selection of the top ten university museums by Shanghai Municipality, the government committed to provide financial support to these museums on an on-going basis. Starting from 2007, university museums have presented a joint exhibition each year in school summer holidays to the public, which played an important role in publicizing their collections and developing community engagement. The general public thus became more aware of the treasures in the 'ivory towers'.

These eleven museums include three natural science museums and eight of human science. They are diverse in collection and all have unique features based on their academic subject. Please also refer to tables 1 and 2 for data from the survey of eleven university museums in Shanghai.

Among the eight human science museums, Fudan University Museum is well known for its collection of native Taiwanese cultural heritage, the best and biggest of its kind in mainland China. East China Normal University Chinese Ancient Coins Museum displays over 500 well-preserved coins in dynasties as well as oracle bone inscriptions, stone implements, jade objects, bronze ware, gold silver ware, and ancient weapons, etc. Donghua University Chinese Costume Museum, occupying a construction area of 6,700 square meters, has a rich collection in Chinese textile and costumes. Shanghai Normal University Ceramics Museum boasts ceramics collections from prehistoric Ma Jia Culture to Han, Sui, Tang and Ming and Qing Dynasties, covering all the important kilns in the history. Among the collections of The Museum of Oriental Musical Instruments, Shanghai Conservatory of Music, the highlights are an 8000 years old heptatonic bone flute, a bronze idiophone of Han Dynasty and a set of collected bronze bells. Shanghai Theatre Academy Chinese Traditional Opera Museum features a collection of texts, original manuscripts, artworks, performance costumes, archives and audio-video records of Chinese traditional operas. University of Shanghai for Science and Technology Printing Museum focuses on the ancient typography and development of printing in China. Shanghai University of Sport Chinese Martial Art Museum presents history and culture of martial art with artifacts (tools), photographs, videos.

There are three natural science museums. Shanghai Jiaotong University C.Y. Tung Maritime Museum features nautical charts, photographs, archival materials, maritime trade routes and relevant artifacts, reflecting Chinese maritime history. Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine Museum has more than 15,000 objects and specimens in its unique collection of Chinese medicine. Shanghai Ocean University Museum has a large collection of 40,000 fish specimens, including an 18.4 meters long sperm whale skeleton specimen.

Digitization of collection data and exhibitions has become a strong trend in recent years. In 2001, supported by the Ministry of Education as part of a National Online Education Resources Network - University Digital Museums Project, Fudan University Museum and Shanghai Jiao Tong University Ship Museum launched their digital presence. Shanghai Theatre Academy Chinese Traditional Opera Museum has also developed a sophisticated digital theatre to showcase traditional opera and performance art in China. The rest of the museums use websites to both inform and communicate with potential audiences, with the exception for Shanghai Ocean University Museum which does not have a website.

University museums and World Expo

To respond to the World Expo 2010, university museums have taken the initiative to contribute to the event and promote their traditional culture. As summarized in table 1, most of them made efforts to either provide more or extend existing programs. Some museums have been more active than others. For instance, the Museum of Oriental Musical Instruments has taken a comprehensive and proactive approach and improved all aspects of its service:

1. To participate in the one-month long joint exhibition of university museums during World Expo;
2. To increase capacity, the museum created a multimedia group guide system, in Chinese and English versions;
3. To optimize and update the information retrieval system of world musical instruments;
4. To setup a large screen to display musical performance from China and around the world;
5. During the World Expo 2010, in addition to normal open hours, the museum was open by appointment on weekends, holidays or evenings;
6. Seminars and lectures are now provided to help audiences better understand knowledge and history of musical instruments;
7. Musical instrument professionals are available in the museum for any enquiry;
8. Chinese traditional musical instrument performances and appreciation programs are provided by appointment.
9. On-site tutoring of musical instrument and interactive programs is available.

The above measures fall into four categories: upgrading facilities and systems, improving exhibition content, improving service levels, and improving accessibility.

As a result, visitor numbers have increased and the museum-going experience for visitors is improved. The museum's audience is geographically broader.

University museums are additional cultural sites for World Expo 2010, that supplement the main site developed specifically for the event. They have a great opportunity to present unique, more specialized collections such as oriental musical instruments (as discussed above). This showcases the culture and spirit of the host city, while World Expo brings a diverse international audience to university museums that helps build profile and awareness.

The challenge is that World Expo is a one-off event but university museums are seeking long term development goals. When we look at the approaches of the eleven university museums, we find some strategies that may help achieve long term goals, while others are less likely to have an impact beyond Expo. So a significant question is how to achieve continuous improvement after Expo. The Museum of Oriental Musical Instruments has set a good example.

Summary

By investigating and assessing the efforts and strategies of university museums during World Expo 2010 Shanghai, it is concluded that such large events are opportunities for university museums to improve and promote themselves and they in return are valuable supplementary cultural resources for World Expo. The approaches university museums have taken to contribute can be considered as a catalyst towards their longer term goals, rather than mere stand alone short term opportunities. In conclusion, all university museums should seek opportunities to both contribute to, and benefit from, large national and international cultural festivals.

Literature cited

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University museums	Museum type	Feature collection	Facility
Fudan University Museum	Human science/cultural history/folk art	Gaoshan folk culture	1,600sqm, 2-story building with 2 permanent exhibition spaces and 2 temporary exhibit spaces
Shanghai Jiaotong University C.Y. Tung Maritime Museum	Natural science/science & technology/transport	Ship, marine history	600sqm, 2-story building
East China Normal University Chinese Ancient Coins Museum	Human science/cultural history/numismatics	Ancient coins	1,300sqm, two exhibition spaces
Donghua University Chinese Costume Museum	Human science/cultural history & art/textile, costume, folk art	Costume and textile	6,748sqm, 5-story building
Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine Museum	Natural science/medicine	Traditional Chinese medicine	6,314sqm, 3-story building, plus 9,300sqm of botanic garden area
Shanghai Ocean University Museum	Natural science/ecology	Fish specimens	1,036sqm
Shanghai Normal University Ceramics Museum	Human science/cultural history and art/fine arts, folk art, decorative arts	Chinese ceramics	740sqm
The Museum of Oriental Musical Instruments, Shanghai Conservatory of Music	Human science/cultural history & art/musicology	Oriental musical instruments	1,200sqm
Shanghai Theatre Academy Chinese Traditional Opera Museum	Human science/cultural history & art/musicology, opera	Chinese traditional opera	
University of Shanghai for Science and Technology Printing Museum	Human science/cultural history & art/printing	Printing	1,000sqm
Shanghai University of Sport Chinese Martial Art Museum	Human science/cultural history & art/martial art, folk art	Chinese martial art	2,000sqm

Table 1 - Survey of eleven university museums in Shanghai covering museum type, nature of collection and physical capacity.

University museums	e-museum	Special programs or approaches during World Expo	Improvement category
Fudan University Museum	Digital museum www.digmus.fudan.edu.cn/	Special tours provided.	Improved service level.
Shanghai Jiaotong University C.Y. Tung Maritime Museum	Digital museum shipmuseum.sjtu.edu.cn/	Special tours provided.	Improved service level.
East China Normal University Chinese Ancient Coins Museum	Website ggbmuseum.ecnu.edu.cn/	Two special public programs provided focusing on numismatics and historical artifacts including group tours and worksheets.	Improved service level.
Donghua University Chinese Costume Museum	Website 202.120.157.100/pages/pages2.aspx?page=6&id=438	Free entry and open 5 days a week from Tuesday to Saturday during World Expo.	Improved accessibility.
Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine Museum	Website www.shutcm.com/shutcm/bowuguan/	Provided purpose designed full day special tour and workshop.	Improved service level.
Shanghai Ocean University Museum	No website	1. Free entry for children and students; 2. Provided special tours; 3. Provided scientific film viewing; 4. Provided one-week long camp of life sciences for students groups; 5. Quiz designed for visitors with awards for the winners.	Improved accessibility, service level & exhibition content.
Shanghai Normal University Ceramics Museum	Website bwg.shnu.edu.cn/Default.aspx?tabid=1842	Provided special tours for student groups including museum visits and performance viewing.	Improved service level.

Table 2 - Survey of eleven university museums in Shanghai covering digital presence, additional Expo activities and their classification (Part 1).

University museums	e-museum	Special programs or approaches during World Expo	Improvement category
The Museum of Oriental Musical Instruments, Shanghai Conservatory of Music	Website www.shcmusic.edu.cn/html/dongfanglegibowuguan/jianjijie/1637801.html	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To participate in the one-month long joint exhibition of university museums during World Expo; 2. To increase reception capacity, the museum created a multimedia group guide system, in Chinese and English version; 3. To optimize and update the information retrieval system of world musical instruments; 4. To setup a large screen to display musical performance from China and around the world; 5. During the World Expo 2010, in addition to normal open hours, the museum is open by appointment on weekends, holidays or off hours including evenings; 6. Seminars and lectures are provided to help audience better understand knowledge and history of musical instruments; 7. Musical instrument professionals are available in the museum for any enquiry; 8. Chinese traditional musical instrument performance and appreciation program are provided by appointment; 9. On-site tutoring of musical instrument and interactive programs. 	Improved accessibility, service level, exhibition content, facilities & information management.
Shanghai Theatre Academy Chinese Traditional Opera Museum	Digital theatre museum www.sta.edu.cn:8080/xjxy/szbwg/index.jsp	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provided two special programs with the theme of art experience and art mysteries, each including sessions of lecture, performance, and interactive experience; 2. Provided incursions to schools with exhibitions, lectures and other programs. 	Improved service level, exhibition content & accessibility.
University of Shanghai for Science and Technology Printing Museum	Website ysbwg.sppc.edu.cn/a/benguangai kuang/2009/0921/4.html	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Special tour about Chinese printing history, including museum visits, questionnaire and knowledge competition; 2. Special program about appreciation of printing artifacts; 3. Special workshop about modern printing technology; 4. Special workshop about traditional engraving printing. 	Improved service level.
Shanghai University of Sport Chinese Martial Art Museum	Website www.wushumuseum.com/cn/	Provided 2-hour special tour including museum visiting, interactive experience, and on-site learning of martial art.	Improved service level

Table 3 - Survey of eleven university museums in Shanghai covering digital presence, additional Expo activities and their classification (Part 2).

